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THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE OFFICER EFFECTIVENESS REPORT AS PROMOTION SELECTION TOOL

By COLONEL BILLY W. HUDSON

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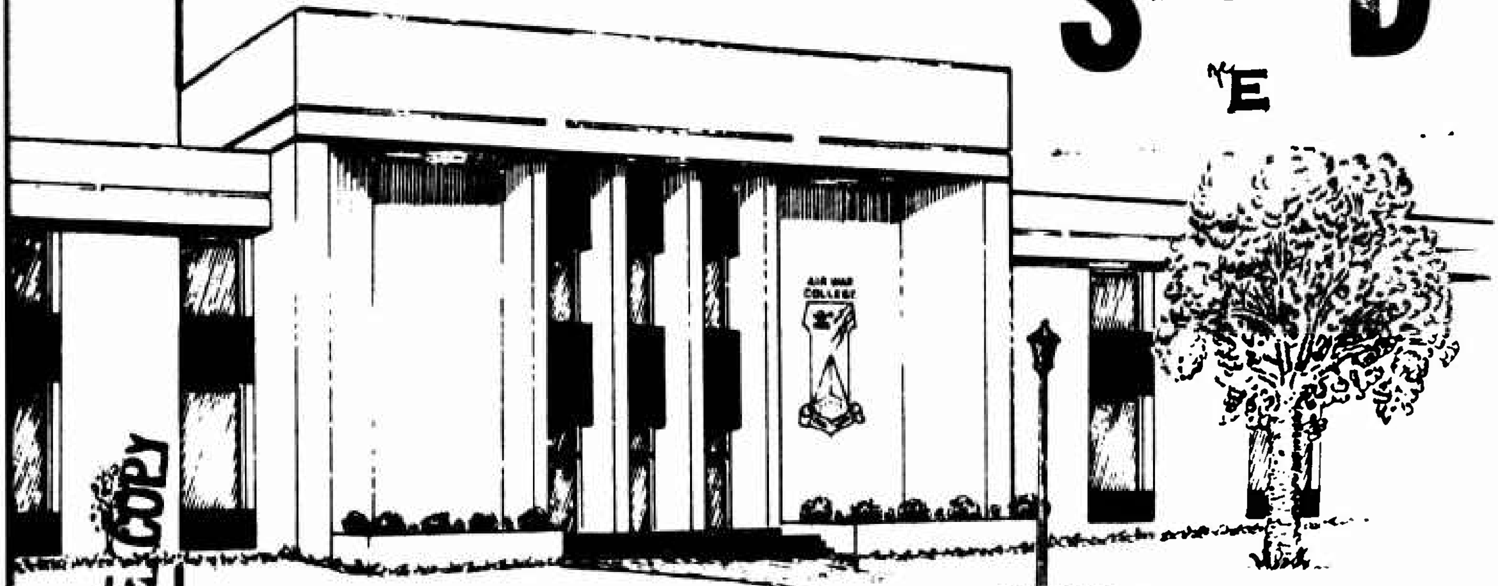

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UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA

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AIR WAR COLLEGE
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THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE OFFICER EFFECTIVENESS REPORT AS PROMOTION SELECTION TOOL

by

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A RESEARCH REPORT PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY

IN

FULFILLMENT OF THE RESEARCH

REQUIREMENT

Research Advisor: Colonel Thomas F. Seebode

MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA

March 1986

DISCLAIMER-ABSTAINER

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ABSTRACT

The United States Air Force (USAF) Officer Effectiveness Report (OER) is the performance appraisal system for the officer corps. Uses of the OER include personnel selection for training, assignments, reductions in force, and, most importantly, promotions. Since the primary function of the officer corps is to lead, the OER should be focused on leadership potential. This paper reviews officership and leadership in the military; summarizes results of recent studies in performance appraisal; discusses the extent to which the present OER addresses leadership; and, makes recommendations for improving the leadership potential aspects of the OER. The paper develops a list of eight "desirable" leadership traits to be used as rating dimensions, or performance factors. These traits are: knowledge, planning ability, goal setting, communicative ability, personal contacts, initiative, delegation, and responsibility. In addition, the paper recommends a retain/release rating block of professional competence to address the "required" traits for an officer. The paper concludes that the present OER addresses leadership to a great extent; however, the recommended traits provide a broader scope in evaluation of leadership potential.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Colonel Hudson is a tactical fighter pilot with combat experience in the F-4 and research and development experience in the F-15. He holds the Distinguished Flying Cross with two oak leaf clusters, the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, the Meritorious Service Medal with oak leaf cluster, and the Air Medal with thirty oak leaf clusters. He has served as a line pilot, instructor pilot, and Tactical Air Command pilot on the F-15 Joint Test Force. His most recent assignments were as Chief of Command and Control for Red Forces, Range Group, Nellis AFB, NV and as Chief of Air Defense, AIRSOUTH, Naples, Italy. Colonel Hudson holds a Bachelor of Science degree from Louisiana Tech in Electrical Engineering. He is also a 1978 graduate of Naval Command and Staff College.

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Chapter 1

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Orientation

The process of identification, selection, training, and appointment of leadership is crucial to modern organizations. The leaders directly affect the future of the organization by setting policy, plans, and guidance. Therefore, it is essential to assure that the process for installing those leaders is correct in all aspects: from evaluation of potential candidates to sustained development of managers in the organization. A key instrument in this process is the on-going performance appraisal which rates performance and promotion potential. The United States Air Force (USAF) performance appraisal system for officers is the Officer Effectiveness Report (OER).

The OER is used for several personnel decisions, including officer promotions. As part of the officers' "selection folder," the OER provides basic data upon which promotion selection boards base decisions. Therefore, the OER should evaluate the factors which will contribute to the officer's success in the higher grade and position of authority. Does the USAF OER constitute an adequate promotion selection tool?

This study addressed the question through a review of the literature on officership, leadership, and performance appraisal. The major thrust was first to identify key factors in officer performance and promotion and then to focus on the extent to which the OER addresses these key factors. The initial effort led to further research of the USAF promotion system itself. Analysis indicated that the present OER system focuses on leadership; however, the system can be enhanced to aid promotion selection based on leadership ability and potential.

Organization

Officership and Leadership

Chapter 2 reviews officership and leadership in the USAF officer corps. The primary function of the USAF officer corps is to lead. Studies conducted over the years developed lists of distinct, definable traits which distinguish leaders from the rest of the population. There was both commonality and some degree of disagreement among these lists. Today, discussion involves the so-called "One-Best-Style" and the "Situational Theories of Leadership." The two are actually complementary: "style" being attitudinal, and "situation" being environmental. Good leaders use certain character traits to adjust their "style" to the "situation." Furthermore, research has shown that leaders are apt to be more successful if they have certain traits or have had certain experience. Therefore, leadership traits are the starting point in the study of leadership.

Chapter 2 enumerates these leadership traits; distinguishes between "required" and "desired" traits; and, concludes by noting that present performance may be used in some circumstances as a partial indication of leadership potential.

Performance Appraisal (PA)

Chapter 3 summarizes results of recent studies in the field of personnel appraisal (PA), addressing purpose, structure, problems, and growth. Results of PA can be used for such personnel actions as transfer/demotion/separation decisions, compensation decisions, counseling, training and development decisions, and validation of personnel selection procedures. The organization's senior managers should decide what objective is to be achieved with the appraisal, then tailor the appraisal system to meet the needs.

There are ten general types of appraisal methods, most of which exhibit one or more of the universal problems: halo, leniency, and bias. Attempts to minimize these problems include such schemes as rating teams, statistical processing, and "critical performance elements."

Discussion

Chapter 4 briefly reviews the USAF OER and promotion systems; compares the present OER with the leadership traits identified in Chapter 2; and, makes recommendations for enhancing the OER system as a promotion selection tool. The

OER provides information for organizational personnel decisions and feedback to individual ratees. The promotion system, which uses centralized selection boards of senior officers to rank order individual promotion folders, relies almost exclusively on the OER for inputs from the individual supervisors. The OER form incorporates a combination of graphic rating scales and narratives, which rate ten Performance Factors and Promotion Potential. The present OER evaluates leadership extensively but lacks the scope of the traits in Chapter 2. Therefore, the ability of the OER to evaluate leadership potential can be improved. Chapter 4 proposes replacing the OER performance factors with the eight "desirable" leadership traits and a professional competence rating to include the "required" traits.

Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Chapter 5 summarizes the study findings, conclusions, and recommendations. Areas of recommendation include leadership evaluation, OER rating dimensions, rating feedback, and rater training. Recommendations are based on the comparison of the OER Performance Factors with leadership traits. The development of these traits and their application to the USAF officer corps are key to an effective leadership. Therefore, the beginning point for this study is in the field of leadership.

Chapter 2

LEADERSHIP

A leader is a person who influences the behavior of others in the direction of the leader's goals; and, organizational leadership is an interactive process of influencing individual and group behavior to obtain the organization's goals (14:101). This chapter reviews officership and leadership in the USAF officer corps. Leadership discussions revolve around style, trait, and situation. Good leaders adjust their style to the situation; but, research has shown that leaders are apt to be more successful if they have certain traits or have had certain experience (14:277). Therefore, leadership traits are the starting point in the study of leadership. The following paragraphs enumerate these leadership traits; distinguish between "required" and "desired" traits; and, conclude by noting that present performance may be used in some circumstances as a partial indication of leadership potential.

Officership

The primary purpose of the military officer corps is to lead. This stems directly from the officer's commission and from the standard practices of a hierarchical organization (23:145-152; 27:18,67-68). A number of traits or characterizations of leadership have been identified through extensive research (22:678-683). While individual experts argue against focusing on leadership traits (27:73), most agree that "success is much more likely if the manager has certain characteristics, exhibits certain behavior, and/or has had certain experiences" (14:277). Therefore, organizations could combine the results of research in leadership and appraisal systems to focus personnel performance on leadership.

The military officer, whether in command or as a member of the commander's staff, is charged to lead (23:145-152). Samuel Huntington expressed this leadership function in definitive terms: "The direction, operation, and control of a human organization whose primary function is the application of violence is the peculiar skill of the officer" (21). The officer's entire orientation is toward leadership: As commander he sets the example, the "vision", and the goals for the men of his command (3); or, as a staff member, he assists the commander in setting the goals, establishing the vision, and conducting the unit toward its objective (25:40; 23:152-153). Regardless of rank or position, the military officer is a leader--by calling, training, heritage, and commission.

The most important reason for evaluating leadership potential is to ensure the quality of the officer corps on a continuing basis. The next most important reason is to identify a pool of potential leaders from which to draw when needed in event of war. Witness President Lincoln's arduous search for an effective leader for the Union Army at the beginning of the Civil War. Also, General of the Army George C. Marshall's efforts to install effective leadership during the initial phases of World War II (29:31-33) make it obvious that the identification of leaders on a continual basis must be institutionalized. The military must be able to identify its potential leaders in a routine, on-going effort: There may not be sufficient time to re-man the critical leadership positions prior to the next major war. It is also essential that effective leadership up and down the chain of command structure not have to rely on one key individual to personally realign the manning.

Academic Discussions

The question of whether the military could have geared itself up so quickly without General Marshall's personal involvement in leadership manning is academic. The military's concern for management in the 1960's (perhaps stemming from Peter Drucker's classic 1954 work, The Practice of Management, and certainly pushed by Secretary of Defense McNamara's emphasis on Operations Research and analytical methodology) diverted attention. The resulting shift in the language to emphasize management caused a widespread uneasiness in the Air Force. There was serious concern that the essence of the officer corps was becoming oriented toward management considerations at the expense of leadership (4:168-170).

As might be expected from a close reading of Drucker, the shift in emphasis from leadership to management was only a temporary perturbation (9:158-160). The overall requirement for leadership by the officer corps did not diminish. Eventually the language, and the emphasis in the Professional Military Education courses shifted back to leadership. The brief detour into the management world provided a broader intellectual background to the officer corps and left a legacy of more structure and discipline in decision making, particularly in business oriented matters. Cost-benefit analysis, Operations Research, and systems analysis provided a rational base for the "intuition", "rules of thumb", and "gut feel" which had long been the stock in trade for military decision makers. The good leaders added the mathematical tools to their repertoire and proceeded with the job of leading. The controversy over leadership and management was irrelevant: the effective leader will be a good manager at the outset (28:271-272).

Another discussion involved leadership style versus leadership traits. Proponents of the "One Best Style" of leadership claimed that the best leader combines two essential elements or dimensions simultaneously: high concern for the people working for them; and, high concern for objective accomplishment (2:45-47). Proponents of the "Leadership Traits" school of thought claimed that leadership is made up of numerous personality or character traits. This latter theory allows for analysis of various characteristics in an individual. McGregor viewed leadership as a relationship between followers, organization, environment, and the leader (27:72). The ideas could be combined to say that the "One Best Style" expresses an attitude; and, "Traits" are part of a person's personality, regardless of attitude (17:50). The "Trait" theory also accommodates changes in leadership style to suit the situation. This is a particularly useful factor in analysing the actions of past leaders. Leaders throughout history tended to be quite flexible in style, sliding back and forth across the spectrum, making the study of any one style difficult and tending to discredit the "One Best Style" theory.

Studies of past leaders were important because an analysis of leader actions and decisions led to clearer identification of characteristics, factors, and conditions of effective leadership. Once identified, these subjects could be taught to others. This in turn dispensed with another controversy: whether leaders are born or made. If the key essentials can be taught, then leaders can be made. General S.L.A. Marshall of the Royal Air Force agreed that leadership can be taught, with the important stipulation that the individual be endowed with one predisposing characteristic: commitment (30:10-13).

Leadership Traits

General S.L.A. Marshall went on to list some of the essential ingredients for a successful leader: intelligence, courage, decisiveness, successful image, candidness, ability to set an example, ability to balance challenge with limitations, ability to delegate, ability to communicate, and ability to take risks (30:13-22).

General Omar Bradley was convinced that leadership can be developed and improved by study and training (3:6). General Bradley, while acknowledging that there are many qualities which contribute to effective leadership, listed the following as being perhaps the most important: job knowledge, demonstrated interest, mental and physical energy, human understanding and consideration, conviction, confidence, imagination, and character (3:4-6).

General Maxwell Taylor proposed four categories of leadership characteristics: professional competence, intellectual capacity, strength of character, and inspirational qualities (37:85). General Taylor thought that the first three of these could be enhanced through study, training, and experience, but he was less certain that inspirational qualities could be purposefully instilled or improved (37:92-93).

By way of a comparison with civilian leadership, Wendell French reported that Chief Executive Officers from Fortune 500 companies in 1980 looked for the following traits in successors: integrity, ability to get along with people, industriousness, intelligence, business knowledge, assuming leadership, and education (14:281). Rodman Drake proposed that successful executives possess some combination of the following traits: ability to focus attention, emphasis on simple values, staying in touch with people, avoiding pseudoprofessionalism, managing change, ability to delegate, and ability to accept responsibility (8:24-26). And finally, Robert Swanson, Chief Executive Officer for Del Webb Corporation during its recovery in 1981-82, looked for five personal qualities in his Human Resources managers: ethics and integrity, planning ability, ability to keep crises small, risk-taking initiative, and ability to control costs (19:9).

This review shows a commonality of factors between lists and some interrelationship between elements within lists. Therefore, these traits can be arbitrarily grouped in order to reduce the size of the list and facilitate discussion. The lists lend themselves to several methods of categorization, but the first concern is: What are the most basic ingredients for leadership?

The consensus of the experts does not assign relative importance to these traits or provide a frame of reference to distinguish the "required" from the "desirable" traits. The following discussion on group acceptance of authority makes this distinction between "required" and "desirable" traits.

Legitimacy

The theory for legitimacy of leadership is based on Chester Barnard's Acceptance Theory of Authority (26:79-80). In accordance with the theory, the group judges its leader based on group values and goals and, therefore, accepts the leader so long as he adheres to the group's values and goals. From this standpoint the leader, constrained by the group's values and goals, is a *de facto* follower. The important point of this theory is that the leader must have certain characteristics before the group will accept his leadership. Once the group accepts the leader, then additional characteristics enable the leader to direct the group's efforts. Thus, group acceptance demands certain "required" traits; and, continued leadership is enhanced by "desirable" traits which contribute to the leader's effectiveness.

Required Traits

The following five categories of traits are the basic foundations for a leader's character. These traits define the minimum acceptable parameters of the leader's character.

Intelligence. A sound mind is the leader's most effective tool. Properly trained and attuned, the mind will assimilate and process data, make decisions, adjust leadership styles, and literally establish the foundations for all other characteristics (3; 8; 14; 19; 30; 37; 39). This is the trait most common to all lists. This does not mean that the leader must be the smartest member of the group, but it does imply that the leader must have the ability to recognize and effectively utilize the ideas of others (3:3).

Integrity. General S.L.A. Marshall addressed pseudoprofessionalism and integrity in the following way:

> In whatever calling, the man chosen to lead must first of all be true to himself--his ideals, nature, character and sense of humanities...It is never necessary to play a part; so doing is an admission that one's self is not big enough (30:14).

For higher command levels this necessarily entails matching resources with tasks assigned to subordinates. The lack of resources to meet tasking after the Vietnam war, combined with refusal of senior officers to recognize or admit the situation, drove junior officers into an irreconcilable dilemma: do the job without adequate resources (an impossibility); or, falsify reports to avoid negative career impact (4:171-172). Integrity, as a collection of traits for this discussion, should include honesty. For honesty is essential to personal credibility. It is a basic value by which the group judges the leader's acceptability, or legitimacy. Honesty is key to gaining confidence, which McGregor said is the first requirement for the effective manager (27:42).

Courage. Clausewitz refers to "experience and courage of the troops" as one of the principal moral elements in war (39:186). The leader must unify his unit with his own fortitude. He sets the example for success at all times; and personally leads during crises.

Success. General S.L.A. Marshall remarked: "Faith in ultimate success is the road to success itself" (30:19). Martin Smith in advising managers now to establish a good management team said: "...demonstrate that you're a boss with vision, that you set realistic and obtainable--though difficult goals, and that you create an environment where accomplishment is amply rewarded" (36:44-45). General Bradley included LUCK as one of the essential ingredients for a great leader (3:6). While neither success nor luck can be taught or adequately controlled to the leader's satisfaction, he can maintain a positive image, a positive attitude and keep up the momentum.

Commitment. The dedicated officer must be able to carry out assigned tasks completely and thoroughly; he must be able to follow through. General S.L.A. Marshall placed all other traits second to commitment when he said:

> The more superficial traits of manner, bearing, initiative, and magnetism may lift him into leadership, but in the eventual test of time only commitment can see him successfully through real crises (30:13).

Sun Zi, the Chinese philosopher and general, noted in 514 BC: "Weak leadership can wreck the soundest strategy; forceful execution of even a poor plan can often bring victory" (33:25). Commitment also entails the mental and physical energy, enthusiasm, and "stubborness" General Bradley saw as essential leadership traits (3:5).

This concludes the list of five basic categories of traits an individual must have in order to receive group acceptance as the leader. Lack of any of these fundamental elements undercuts the individual's legitimacy to lead. Possessing these basic traits, the leader can begin to build on the other traits to enhance leadership ability.

Desirable Traits

In addition to the preceding required traits, there are eight desirable characteristics which contribute to the success of an individual as a leader. These traits may be present in varying degrees, but, in general, the more these traits are present, the more successful the individual leader will be.

Knowledge. The successful leader must be technically competent in the unit's specialty (3:4; 37:84-85; 14:281). In addition, he must be knowledgeable of the organization's policies, plans, personnel and structure. Only with thorough knowledge can the leader adequately train his people and form a solid base for planning activity. This is Douglas Freeman's "know your stuff," of which he said "...know your own branch...know the related arms of the service...and know the yesterdays" (13:4-5).

Planning Ability. The ability to manage time, work, and people to achieve the organization's objectives is key to effective leadership (14:112). In this vein, General Bradley considered imagination to be important:

> Imagination is the quality that enables [the leader] to anticipate the train of consequences that would follow from his contemplated courses of action. He can minimize error and be prepared for likely contingencies (3:6).

Goal Setting. The effective leader must have the "vision" to see and set realistic achievement goals. This implies evaluating job accomplishment in light of what was available to work with--not relative to some ideal standard (4:174).

Communicative Ability. Both written and oral communications are essential to selling ideas up and down the organization. General Taylor staunchly supported the need for communicative skills in the leader when he said:

> If asked to identify certain intellectual gifts particularly appropriate to the tasks...of a leader, I would underscore the importance of clarity and facility in oral and written expression (37:86).

Personal Contacts. Leadership effectiveness depends on the individual's ability to get along with people both above and below. One of the chief functions of the leader is to interface with other agencies, offices, and groups (4:80-81). Acquiring, maintaining, and expanding these contacts is key to the leader's continued success. General Bradley advocated frequent visits with subordinates to demonstrate interest and to offer recognition and encouragement (3:4-5).

Initiative. The effective leader must be a self-starter and able to handle risk. He must be able to realistically assess and plan for risk in order to take advantage of opportunities. General S.L.A. Marshall said of decision making and risk:

> True decision making means the resolution of a dilemma, doing something when there is no computing the most favorable course. It is a leap into the dark, the acceptance of the large risk, done almost in the spirit of the gambler. That's how things are done in combat, or for that matter, in the world of business and in personal affairs (30:16).

Delegation. The most productive leaders are able to select good subordinates, accurately assess their own and the subordinates' capabilities and limitations, and assign tasks at the appropriate level. McGregor commented on the benefits of delegating:

> We have learned...if we push decisions down in an organization as far as we possibly can, we tend to get better decisions, people...grow and develop more rapidly, and...are motivated more effectively (27:121).

This does not mean abrogation of the leader's duties or responsibilities. It does imply the self-discipline to stand up occassionally to the next higher commander in taking responsibility for what is being achieved as compromise between current necessity and investment in greater future capability (4:186). Delegation also implies the self discipline to allow subordinates to learn from their mistakes. General S.L.A. Marshall remarked that "the truly modest man as leader has no desire to preen himself and no impulse to deny trust to his subordinates" (30:15).

Responsibility. The real leader acknowledges to himself and to others that he is ultimately responsible for the group's success or failure. The ability to build on success and to learn from failure is an essential key to productive, effective leadership. Lieutenant General Catton related responsibility to several other characteristics when he addressed the Air Command and Staff College in 1968:

> The depth of your sense of responsibility is reflected in your willingness to take charge, act with ambition and enthusiasm, be dedicated to your profession, and assume responsibility for your mission (6:20-21).

This concludes the list of desirable leadership traits. The mechanism for evaluating such factors remains open. While there are numerous performance appraisal methods available, few address potential in a detailed analysis of performance dimensions.

Followership and Leadership

The concept of the leader being a follower in the same group leads to the idea of identifying leadership potential by evaluating the individual's ability to follow. The ability to motivate others, sell ideas, carry out directions, and hone skills are essential to the leader's character and position. Moreover, these items are important performance elements for the individual group members. Therefore, using the personnel appraisal system, it is conceivable to use present performance as a partial indication of leadership potential. The next chapter reviews performance appraisal in general and discusses three of the more promising ideas for improving the process.

Chapter 3

DEVELOPMENTS IN PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

This chapter summarizes results of recent studies and thought in the field of personnel appraisal (PA). The chapter addresses four aspects of the PA process: purpose, structure, problems, and growth. An overview of the literature leads to identifying a number of tools of the trade, and provides a basis for conclusions and recommendations included in the summary.

Purpose of Performance Appraisal

Results of the performance appraisal process are used for a variety of purposes including: behavior modification (or enforcement); motivation: and information for personnel management decisions (promotion, award, transfer, etc.). Other functions include work role definition, pay increases, tenure, employee protection, training selection, organizational control, record of performance, communications, and "to let employees know where they stand" (34:72). As with any data base, bureaucracies tend to adopt PA results to purposes beyond the original intent.

Frequently, there is also a difference of opinion between management and the workers as to the purpose of PA. Managers believe the PA process is to allow workers to make inputs to work definition; whereas, workers see it as a means of feedback on pay, planning, and developmental issues. Research indicates workers more readily accept PA systems which they have helped develop; therefore, involving workers in PA development could be one way to refocus the purpose on organizational objectives, if required (24:33, 72).

The broad range of uses for the PA process has not changed significantly in the recent past, but the literature shows an inclination toward narrowing the scope (34:72). The single system cannot be optimized for all possible purposes. Wendell French noted that the purposes of motivation and behavior modification are mutually exclusive (14:337). McGregor noted a basic conflict between the judicial role demanded of the supervisor in the PA process and the advisory role the supervisor plays in helping subordinates achieve personal and organizational goals (27:187-188). Therefore, there may be a number of additional uses of the PA process which are mutually exclusive. The implication is that the scope of uses must be narrowed in order for the PA process to be useful. Otherwise, the entire process will be diluted.

The majority of PA systems are set up to measure performance in the present job and ignore potential. Therefore, promotion selection using such a system is based on the employee's performance in the present job rather than on potential to perform in the new job. Leadership traits also vary between different levels of the organization (4:85-86). Obviously then, the PA system must be tailored to serve the purpose: For promotion selection, the PA process should evaluate potential; for award and recognition, the PA process should evaluate performance. Some researchers advocate tailoring the method to the purpose: traditional approach for promotion evaluation, training selection, and merit raises; and, collaborative approach to develop employees (38:71). (Collaborative throughout this paper refers to a PA method in which the worker participates in development of goals, criteria, implementation, etc.)

According to some experts, career development discussions should be separated from the routine PA functions such as pay and work planning; and, a separate system should address career opportunities, development needs, and the career track with the individual in another joint, integrated program (24:34). One organization used a separate section of the same PA form for promotion recommendations. In this section, employees indicated job preferences three to five years in the future. Supervisors then commented on whether the plan was feasible, when, how, and the training required (15:39). Thus, the evaluation of present performance and potential capability were addressed separately.

Performance Appraisal Methods

The following paragraphs address the various methods used in the PA process. Most of the recent research in PA has focused on the "form", as opposed to the "means" (24:22). This is a concern because the means of achieving the output may be more important than the output itself in some instances (20:264). Personnel appraisal methods are based on three wide perspectives: (1) economic indices or results; (2) personality or traits; and, (3) through observation of behavior (16:37). These three broad perspectives are addressed in more specific terms through different "systems" or "methods". Following are descriptions of six common PA methods:

Graphic Rating Scale

Job dimensions are rated on a scaled continuum running generally from poor to superior. Most scales are heavily subjective and often are oriented to quantifying intangibles such as attitude and loyalty (5:102;38:72). Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scales (BARS) constitute a special application of this method. A team of job experts collaborate to define performance rating levels throughout the scale continuum. This provides a more precise definition of performance and increases rater objectivity (15:38).

Rank Order Method

Individual employees are compared to other employees to determine which one is better and, thus, to determine the order of performance. This method is specifically oriented to breaking ties since the evaluator is forced to select one employee as a better performer than another (5:124).

Forced Distribution Method

Actually a governing tool applied to other methods, this method imposes limits on the number of employees that can be rated in certain blocks of the rating scale. The primary purpose is to control inflation. Forced distribution limits the number of appraisals given ratings in any given block to force a normal distribution curve (5:125;38:72). The USAF "controlled OER" system (used during the period of 1974-1978) is an example of forced distribution.

Critical Incident Method

Supervisors keep a current record of individual employees' notable actions. The purpose is to document performance throughout the evaluation period, rather than relying on memory to evaluate performance. This method minimizes the problem of "recency", in which more recent incidents dominate the rating (5:120).

Forced Choice Method

Sets of descriptive statements are used to describe an employee's performance. Each descriptive statement has an assigned weighting factor, which is not necessarily available to the rater. The combination of precise descriptions and weighting factors increases the rater's objectivity and reduces "halo" and "leniency" effects (5:121).

Goal-Setting Method

Objectives set at the beginning of the evaluation period are used to measure performance (8:38). Goal-setting is normally a collaborative method with employee and supervisor jointly developing objectives and performance criteria. The premiere example is Management By Objectives (MBO) (9:121-136).

Other

Lesser used PA methods include narratives, checklists, and paired-comparisons (16:38-39). The various methods are presented here as a frame of reference to aid discussion of proposed systems. Most "new" appraisal systems are merely refinements to existing methods. There are a limited number of things that can be evaluated and a limited number of ways to evaluate and document those. Apparently, research has exhausted the list of new things to evaluate without coming to grips with the problems.

Performance Appraisal Problems

The addition of Management By Objectives (MBO) has not alleviated the overall problem of selecting the "best qualified" individuals. The MBO process is tailored to specific individual subordinate and supervisor pairs (27:19-20). Consequently, MBO degrades comparability between individuals. Therefore, organizations using MBO usually have at least one additional appraisal method to determine performance ranking. Other problems in the PA process result from errors.

These errors can result from misunderstanding of the performance criteria, misinterpretation of rating instructions, or personal biases. To show the extent of the problem for practically any PA system, errors can stem from rater, method, ratee, job, context and the interactions of each (11:78). Subjective human and environmental variables which may contribute to potential problems are:

- prejudices (age, sex, race, etc.) and biases (halo, recency, leniency);
- political gaming (by employees, as well as, evaluators);
- attitudes (lack of support by top management);
- political pressures;
- lack of training (in the evaluation system);
- lack of measures (absolute or relative) of performance;

- absence of controls on the overall system;

- ineffectiveness of existing controls; and,

- legal considerations (state and federal laws, appeal procedures) (16:40;20:260).

Some errors are inherent to the evaluation concept itself and will be present to some extent in any PA system, regardless of design. However, proper attention to design and implementation can lead to a better basic PA system. Gordon summarized design flaws as follows:

> Poorly designed performance-assessment programs are characterized by lack of objective standards ...wrong performance criteria, vague definition of performance criteria, and failure to weigh performance factors (16:39).

Additionally, the evaluator's task is complicated when performance is affected by factors beyond the ratee's control, such as jobs requiring input from another branch (20:264).

Fortunately, problems in the PA process have not significantly increased recently. Similarly, however, there is little progress in reducing the number of these problems. The trend in business is to shift from collaborative to traditional methods in an attempt to strengthen the legal defensibility aspects of the PA process through documentation. Management favors the traditional rating methods because they give an appearance of organizational equity; minimize controversy over ratings between supervisor and ratee; and, provide standardized data for decision making (30:74-76). The cost in this shift most likely will be an increase in worker dissatisfaction, with all the attendant drawbacks (i.e. absenteeism, grievances, turnover).

There does not appear to be a single, elegant fix to the problems. The various PA system components are so interlinked that solving a problem in one part of the process may result in a worse problem in another part. In addition, the proposed fixes tend to be expensive in terms of manpower to design and implement. The best fix is a good basic PA system based on sound job analyses. Job analysis is the most essential element for minimizing bias and meeting legal requirements; therefore, job analysis is the starting point for any enhancement program (12; 15; 16; 20; 24; 34).

Rater training can also contribute to enhancing a PA system (20:264-268). Research using feedback in one rater training program reduced leniency, but not halo effect. The feedback, showing scores given by the rater compared to those of the overall company average, was well received by the raters and was judged by the researchers to have good payoff for the organization (7:92-94). Rater feedback could be one of the most cost-effective ways of improving PA systems. Data to provide feedback are usually available within the company and need only be extracted, formatted, and briefly analyzed to let the rater see how he "stacks up" with other raters. Also, rater feedback does not require a substantial amount of growth in the existing PA system.

Growth

Growth and development of innovative ideas depend on experimentation in organizations representative of those in which the finalized systems will be used. However, experimentation can be dangerous to both the organization and its members. Secondary effects such as loss of specialists due to biases can have serious implications for both short-term and long-term goals. For example, military flight test engineers on a base run by test pilots were seriously affected by a forced-distribution rating system. The higher ratings went to pilots. In the next promotion cycle a significant number of engineers were not promoted and, therefore, resigned. As a result of this mass exodus, the organization was forced into a large engineer recruiting campaign and, at the same time, faced the perception by the engineers it was trying to recruit that it could assure neither their development and advancement nor job security.

Due to the serious implications of the PA process, people are wary of changes to existing systems and, therefore, leery of experimentation with new systems. However, researchers continue to develop new ideas in an attempt to find the optimum mix of measurable factors and acceptability.

Three of the more notable schemes to enhance the PA process are addressed below. The first is a proposal to provide "comparability" of performance ratings in an organization spanning different jobs, locations, responsibilities, and characteristics. The second is a structured approach to determining the individual raters' trends and biases in order to build a more equitable system. And the third system is a goal-oriented approach developed to rate federal employees.

Comparability

This concept proposes to integrate several PA tools to enhance comparability. The concept is particularly pertinent to multi-national organizations and those with stratified performance, i.e. one branch has a large proportion of high achievers while another has low achievers. Large organizations are frequently faced with the requirement to promote employees into positions for which there are qualified individuals from several disciplines and branches. Selecting the "best qualified" person is difficult unless there is a way to compare the individuals. The authors proposed a comparability scheme consisting of four key elements: comparable criteria, multiple raters, benchmarks, and linking raters (12:75-82).

Comparable Criteria. A panel of job experts identifies success criteria common to all jobs in the performance group (e.g. communicative skills, judgment, initiative, etc.). These criteria ensure that selection decisions are based on ratings of performance or potential in the most important dimensions of the new job. This also ensures that individuals are rated on similar criteria, thus the rating team is comparing like quantities.

Multiple Rater System. The team approach to rating ensures higher quality of the evaluation because it minimizes personal biases of any single rater and allows for a broader perspective in the evaluation. A variety of rating sources can be used, such as matrix supervisors, coordinating supervisors, or even peer or subordinate ratings. Mathematical computation of a "rater consensus quotient" provides a scaled ranking of the ratees (12:81). The consensus quotient not only rank orders the ratees, but it also provides scores to indicate the absolute difference in performance levels.

Benchmarks. Benchmarks designate blocks of performance, i.e. 90-100 = Excellent; 80-89 = Satisfactory; etc. Benchmarks also provide an anchor in the overall rating process to help the rater answer the question "What is the ratee's performance compared to?"

Linking Raters. Raters able to observe, or link to, a variety of jobs and levels add a better perspective to the evaluation. According to the authors: "The vertical leveling provided by these linking raters dramatically improves between group comparability" (12:75-82).

Procedures. Once the comparable criteria are determined, each ratee choses five to eight raters. This team of raters includes the ratee's immediate supervisor, and should also include at least one rater from a different branch or discipline as a linking rater. Raters then perform the evaluation using a modified forced-choice system with benchmarks for each performance criterion. Results of the rating are mathematically processed to derive a rank-order listing of ratees or a percentile score for each ratee on each criterion.

Mark Edwards et alii proposed the following criteria: leadership, goal accomplishment, problem solving, cooperative influence, organization and planning, personal accountability, initiative, and advancement potential. Results of the first three criteria are processed to determine a professional score. Results of the first seven criteria are processed to determine a composite (summary) score. Advancement potential is the raters' estimate of the likelihood the individual will be promoted in the next two years (12:81-82).

The evaluation can be either part of the on-going appraisal process or an ad hoc comparison with other employees for a special purpose such as promotion. In the latter case, the process could be used instead of the more expensive Assessment Center concept (10:146-155).

Discussion. The concept for achieving comparability has promise since it addresses a large number of the problem areas in PA. Conversely, the concept also involves multiple raters, mathematical processing of scores, and has yet to be experimentally verified. Success will be contingent upon acceptability both from a cost and understanding viewpoint. The output is a good job-anchored rank order of ratees applicable to a variety of purposes from promotion selection to reductions in force. The amount of time required to develop good criteria, train personnel in the system, and conduct evaluations are disadvantages. However, extensive documentation and simplified output may offset the disadvantages.

Policy Capturing Procedure (POLYCAP).

The idea of POLYCAP is to identify and document a supervisor's weighting factors for individual performance dimensions to obtain an overall (summary) performance rating (18:59-68). Supervisors may not be aware of their own biases and weighting factors. POLYCAP is intended to determine the weighting factors.

The weighting factors are determined on a one time basis prior to the start of the rating period in one of three ways: multiple regression analysis of a trial set of appraisals completed by the supervisor; factors consciously established by the supervisor; or, a combination of these two in which the supervisor formulates a composite weighting factor more accurately reflecting both his intentions and his actual rating behavior.

The factors are applied then to the performance scores during the appraisal process. When the supervisor fills out the PA form, the weighting factor for each performance dimension is applied to the "raw" rating for that dimension to obtain a weighted score. The weighted scores for all performance dimensions are summed then to obtain an overall rating.

This procedure increases reliability and consistency of the PA process; precisely specifies desired ratee behaviors and links behavior to evaluation results; and, provides a framework for monitoring the entire system. In addition, it lets ratees know what is expected; simplifies the PA process; and, facilitates equal opportunity efforts to ensure fairness (18:68).

Work-Results Method (WRM).

The concept for WRM is a collaborative approach in which supervisor and subordinate establish performance standards and performance elements based on a detailed job analysis. This method was driven by the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 which required management to define the work to be measured (performance elements) and the measures (standards) to be used to appraise performance of federal workers. A key feature of WRM is the distinction between critical and non-critical performance elements. This distinction provides built-in weighting factors.

> By using critical elements, supervisors are not forced to give higher summary ratings than they feel is appropriate when the employee may have done well on a number of performance elements, but failed on the most important ones (32:82).

While legal defensibility is the main problem here, WRM also provides ratings based on job analysis. As noted above, job analysis is the key to overcoming problems and providing growth in the PA process.

Summary of Performance Appraisal

New developments in PA are not extensive, and are mainly spin-offs from existing systems. Performance Appraisal systems cannot be optimized for all potential uses simultaneously. Therefore, PA systems should be focused on specific purposes in order to optimize the process; and, changes to optimize the PA system for secondary purposes should be carefully analyzed and evaluated to ensure these changes do not detract from the primary purpose. Furthermore, managers must be cautious in using PA results for other than the primary purpose.

Job performance and promotion potential may require separate evaluation criteria. Both performance and potential may use either "traditional" or "collaborative" methodology, but performance in the present job does not necessarily translate into potential.

Finally, job analysis and rater training are critical to an effective PA system. Personnel managers should take care to ensure that the logical process involving job analysis, job specification, and job evaluation is carefully followed and that the rating system is well understood by the raters. System designers must ensure that rating dimensions adequately reflect the performance factors required by the organization: leaders and future leaders should be evaluated on leadership ability and potential. The next chapter focuses on the official performance appraisal tool for United States Air Force officers, the Officer Effectiveness Report.

Chapter 4

DISCUSSION

This chapter briefly reviews the United States Air Force (USAF) Officer Effectiveness Report (OER) and promotion systems; compares the present OER with the leadership traits identified in Chapter 2; and, makes recommendations for enhancing the OER system as a promotion selection tool based on leadership.

Officer Effectiveness Reports

The purpose of the officer evaluation system is to provide the Air Force with information on the performance and potential of officers for use in making personnel management decisions, such as promotions, assignments, augmentations, school selections and separations. It is intended also to provide individual officers information on their performance and potential as viewed by their evaluators (31:5).

The evaluation process involves four different forms, but the Officer Effectiveness Report (AF Form 707) is the real backbone of the evaluation documentation. The rater uses the Officer Effectiveness Report to document performance and potential for increased responsibility (31:5). This single form provides background information, rating scales, rater comments and narrative, suggested follow-on assignments, and endorsements (comments) by officers in the chain of command above the rater. The OER is maintained in the officer's personnel records and is available to the individual and his supervisor.

The present OER system rates Promotion Potential and Performance Factors of the present job. Performance Factors rate how well the ratee accomplished his particular job, without comparison to other officers in the same grade. In the Potential section, the rater is to evaluate the ratee's capability for assuming greater responsibility, as compared to other officers in the same grade known by the evaluator. Furthermore, the rater bases the evaluation of potential on the ratee's performance and accomplishments during the period of the report but also may include consideration of experience, education, job scope and responsibility (31:9).

The USAF formally instituted or informally evolved a number of mechanisms in attempts to determine true performance. For a period, the USAF employed forced-distribution to discriminate performance. At present, the chief discriminant is the rank of the final endorsing official. The theory being that truly outstanding performance will be acknowledged by higher ranking officers.

The use of endorsements resembles a "linking rater" mechanism currently being discussed in the civilian literature (12:75-82). The scheme to continually elevate an OER may also be seen as a truncated "team rating", wherein successively higher ranking individuals tacitly approve the rating by sending the form upward. The OER culminates, for most purposes, in the selection board process.

Selection Boards

The centralized selection process for promotion and professional schools employs committees of officers to make personnel decisions. Selection decisions are based on documentation contained in the individual's "selection folder" (Officer, HQ USAF Selection Board Group part of the Master Personnel Records), which includes an historical file of the individual's OERs (40:8-11). Selection boards, using the OERs and other documents (Training Reports, Officer Military Record, award citations, official photograph, Officer Selection Brief, etc.) in the selection folder, determine the individual's "assessed potential to serve in the higher grade, in positions of greater responsbility" (40:10). Assessed potential is based on leadership because, as pointed out in Chapter 2, the officer's primary function is to lead, whether he is the commander or part of the commander's staff. Therefore, increased emphasis on leadership in the OER will translate directly into better personnel decisions, including promotion selection, and a higher quality officer corps.

The selection boards are composed only of senior officers, and there is an attempt to assure that the composition of the board accurately reflects the population of eligibles (those being considered for selection).

Procedurally, board members simply rank order the individual selection folders. Conceptually, the board collectively constitutes a linking rater spanning the entire USAF, which ensures comparability of all individuals under consideration.

Feedback from board actions are minimal. Board members may voluntarily review an individual's records with him in an advisory capacity after the board adjourns, but direct feedback relative to the proceedings and findings of a specific board is prohibited (40:14). Official selection board results (selection and non-selection) are disseminated to the individuals concerned through their commanders. Selection results are later given a general release and include detailed breakdown of selection rates by pilot, navigator, medical, etc. Non-selection results are usually confined to official channels (commanders and personnel offices). Experts at the USAF Military Personnel Center, the centralized USAF personnel office, will provide individual counseling upon request. This counseling generally discusses the individual's records and may include advice to the individual for enhancing his records, such as performing higher visibility jobs and acquiring more education.

Promotion Concept

Together, the OER and selection board systems form the USAF promotion mechanism. The OER is the backbone of the individual's promotion selection folder, providing the chief means for the individual supervisor to communicate to the board. The board reviews and rank orders folders of all individuals under consideration; and, the USAF then promotes the number of individuals from the top of the rank order to meet manning needs.

The present OER-promotion system is designed to "qualify" individuals for promotion consideration. That is, the majority of officers will receive high ratings that qualify them for consideration by the selection board. The board members must discriminate between individual folders to make rank order decisions. Discriminants, found in the selection folder, may be professional and academic courses attended, additional duties, official photograph, job history, endorsements, etc. The board rank orders folders on the assumption that the folder adequately represents the officer. In doing so, the board places trust and confidence in the rater and endorser that they have truthfully (within the constraints of the system) described the individual officer and made worthy recommendations. The present system permits an individual who is non-selected one year to be considered for promotion in subsequent years. Therefore, improvements in performance and potential of late bloomers can be recognized. This is in agreement with McGregor who contended that two of management's most important tasks are: to provide conditions in which the workers can develop their inherent potential, capacity for assuming responsibility, and readiness to pursue organization goals; and, to provide a pool of potential leaders "to fill a variety of specific but unpredictable needs" (27:15,76). The officer corps perceived that the controlled OER system eliminated individuals from consideration. Once an individual was rated in the lower half, there was no opportunity to recover. As McGregor noted, an organization in which workers feel an absence of approval will encounter morale problems, and effective discipline will become difficult (27:54-55). The stigma of being in the lower half of the officer corps, coupled with the inability to compensate made the controlled OER system totally unacceptable. Therefore, the USAF was forced to return to a more success oriented OER system, with all the attendant problems (35).

Problems

The acknowledged problems in the present OER system are leniency, rating on general impressions, and differences in the standards of individual evaluators (too hard, too easy) (31:6). These are general performance evaluation problems and not limited to the OER system. Additional significant problems with the OER include inflation, lack of rater training, and lack of feedback. These problems detract from the effectiveness of the OER in documenting an officer's performance and potential both for personnel decisions and letting the ratee know where he stands (1:v-iv).

Inflation.

Inflation of the rating scales and narratives of the OER is driven by two factors. First, the need to use the OER to provide feedback to the ratee and maintain morale requires higher than actual ratings (14:332). Points on the rating scale are well described by the Performance Factors Standards in an array of descriptive remarks in the style of a Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scale (31:47-48). But raters perceive that a realistic rating in accordance with these standards is a sign to the selection board that the individual is an inadequate performer. Writing an OER is an art of signals and subtleties to tell the board what is really meant, while simultaneously maintaining ratee morale. Secondly, the other problems, lack of adequate rater training and lack of feedback to the rater, contribute to inflation.

Lack of Rater Training

Formal training on the OER system is conducted in the resident courses of Squadron Officer School and Air Command and Staff College. Since these courses can be completed by means other than in residence, it is possible for an officer to proceed through the ranks to colonel without receiving any formal training on the OER or the promotion system. For the most part, rater training is "on the job" with reference to the regulations and assistance from the next higher officer in the chain of command. The lack of formal training is exacerbated by the lack of feedback.

Lack of Feedback

The individual must be told how well he is doing to meet his need for security, a basic requirement for organizational success (27:56). The present USAF OER-promotion system is inadequate in this respect. Feedback from the rater to the ratee is direct. The rater can counsel the ratee, for instance, and the OER is always available for review in the individual's personnel records. However, due to inflation in the OER, the rating and counseling may be very different in tone. The OER really does not tell the individual where he stands. In fact, only the Military Personnel Center and, perhaps, the selection board know for sure where the individual stands, and the board proceedings are not released--only select and non-select lists (40:14). Therefore, feedback to the ratee is limited and ambiguous.

Feedback to the rater is even more limited. The reviewing or endorsing official quality controls the OER and "...control[s]...rater tendencies to overrate" (31:43). There is no official feedback required, statistical or otherwise. Therefore, raters have few benchmarks for determining the validity of their own judgements. Raters tend to overstate performance "just to be on the safe side", particularly when the ratee is a good, sound (but average) performer.

The USAF has tacitly accepted inflation of the present OER as a standard practice. The system of signals and innuendoes to the selection boards provides a compromise between discriminating between individuals and maintaining morale. However, a more basic issue than inflation of ratings is the dimensions to be rated.

Performance Factors/Leadership Traits

This section evaluates the extent to which the present OER focuses on identifying leadership potential. The discussion begins by addressing the ten dimensions of the OER Performance Factors. As noted in Chapter 3, past performance does not necessarily translate to future potential; but, as pointed out in Chapter 2, the presence of traits in the individual can be an indication of leadership potential.

The ten OER Performance Factors are job knowledge, judgement and decisions, ability to plan and organize work, management, leadership, adaptability to stress, oral communication, written communication, professional qualities and human relations (31:46). Table 1 presents a summary of the comparison between the OER Performance Factors and leadership traits identified in Chapter 2.

The leadership traits include all ten of the OER

Performance Factors. However, the converse is not true. As shown in the following discussion, the ten Performance Factors of the present OER do not fully cover the eight leadership traits developed in Chapter 2.

Job Knowledge. (Depth, Currency, Breadth). Besides technical knowledge implied in the OER, the individual should possess organizational knowledge. The leader's tasks include interfacing with other offices and training his subordinates. He must have this full dimension of knowledge to be an effective leader. The present OER Performance Factor lacks scope.

Judgement And Decisions. (Consistent, Accurate, Effective). Intelligence most appropriately describes this factor. However, intelligence is one of the "required" traits of Chapter 2. This factor should be placed in a Professional Competence block to indicate the individual's fitness for continued service.

Plan And Organize Work. (Timely, Creative). Planning Ability correlates precisely with this factor.

Management of Resources. (Manpower and Material). Planning Ability also includes this factor.

Leadership. (Initiative, Accept Responsibility).

Initiative and Responsibility include this factor from a definition standpoint. But there is insufficient correlation since leadership includes many more essential traits as shown in Chapter 2.

Adaptability to Stress. (Stable, Flexible, Dependable). This falls under Courage, Intelligence and Success of the required traits. This factor should be placed under Professional Competence.

Oral and Written Communications. (Clear, Concise, Organized, Confident). These factors are included under Communicative Ability. Although individually addressable, writing and speaking are not so different as to warrant separate rating factors and should be combined.

Professional Qualities. (Attitude, Dress, Cooperation). Cooperation should be included under Personal Contacts; the other factors belong in Professional Competence, as indicators of commitment.

Human Relations. (Equal Opportunity Participation, Sensitivity). Sensitivity belongs under Personal Contacts; the other factors should be included under Professional Competence. Bigotry and bias have no place in the military.

Table 2 provides a comparison of present OER Performance Factors with the leadership traits identified in

Chapter 2. There is a considerable degree of match between the two sets of factors. The major difference is one of scope. The leadership traits encompass a broader range of factors, rather than considering leadership as a single dimension. The leadership traits are both fewer in number and broader in scope than the present OER Performance Factors. Therefore, it is clear that the abilitv of the present OER to identify leadership potential can be improved.

Proposal

The purpose of the OER needs to be refocused. The OER should evaluate, as objectively as possible. the quality of the individual's performance of whatever job he holds as it casts light on his ability to perform at higher levels of responsibility in the organizational structure. The present Performance Factors of the OER should be replaced with the leadership traits identified in Chapter 2. Revisions should incorporate a full scale effort to develop Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scales to better define points along the continuum of each factor, similar to the present Performance Factor Standards. While this will not solve the inflation problem, it will provide reference points on which the rater can base his evaluation.

Promotion Potential Index

In order to enhance the OER as a promotion selection tool based on leadership, the ratings should contribute to derivation of an overall promotion potential. The present OER Promotion Potential factor should be replaced with a Promotion Potential Index computed from the eight rated factors because: the traits collectively define leadership; and, promotion should be based on leadership.

Use of an overall index would permit weighting of the scales to emphasize individual factors, similar to the "POLYCAP" mechanism addressed in Chapter 3. The new lieutenant would be heavily weighted in Knowledge; the flight commander would be more heavily weighted in Delegation and Responsibility; and, the squadron operations officer would be more heavily weighted in Goal Setting. The shift in weight places emphasis on the more important aspects of the present job or the next assignment. The individual would improve the right aspects of his job performance while enhancing his promotion index.

Release of Promotion Index figures could provide feedback to ratees and raters alike. However, there are hazards associated with this. The officer corps will resist a promotion system which uses computations based on qualitative observations; therefore, the final decision in promotion selection will remain the prerogative of the selection boards. Should the boards select individuals with lower promotion index numbers over those with higher numbers, the system of weighting and anti-inflationary devices will be invalidated and the officer corps probably will reject the OER system. The three most obvious alternatives are: (1) make the OER a closed system; (2) use the Promotion Potential Index and accept the problems; or, (3) do not use a computed promotion index.

The "closed" OER system is one in which results are not disclosed to the ratee. A closed OER system would further reduce inflationary pressure. Raters would tend to give lower (and, presummably, more accurate) ratings if the OER were not available for review by the subordinate. However, the closed system interrupts an important communication link between supervisor and subordinate and eliminates real feedback to the ratee.

The OER communication link could remain open if the Promotion Index were not used. Not using an overall index may be the the easiest compromise, but it negates the benefits of weighting the scales to attain the desired emphasis on particular performance factors. The challenge is to develop a system which is both functional and acceptable to the officer corps.

A possible solution is a board-derived figure-of-merit (FOM) which is not released. This FOM may be explained as a consolidation of all available data including endorsements, letters to the board, Air Force requirements, and the promotion index. Such a device would leave promotion selection under board jurisdiction, retain a degree of feedback to the ratee, and utilize the scale weighting. It may also be an accurate representation of the selection board process. At any rate, this offers the best compromise between the reality of officer corps acceptance and the requirement to provide feedback to the raters and ratees.

Professional Competence

The required leadership traits should be included as a separate evaluation block. This would be a retain/dismiss figure similar to the "critical element" device addressed in the Work-Results Method discussion in Chapter 3. Factors under Professional Competence should include intelligence, integrity, honesty, courage, successful image, and commitment. Incorporation of these recommendations with the findings and conclusions from previous chapters will provide the baseline for a much improved OER focused on leadership.

Table 1

Potential for Leadership Traits To Meet Present OER Performance Factors

Performance Factors from Present OER	Leadership Traits from Chapter 2
1. JOB KNOWLEDGE	KNOWLEDGE +
2. JUDGEMENT/DECISIONS	INTELLIGENCE/SUCCESS
3. PLAN/ORGANIZE WORK	PLANNING ABILITY
4. MANAGEMENT OF RESOURCES	PLANNING ABILITY
5. LEADERSHIP	INITIATIVE/RESPONSIBILITY
6. ADAPTABILITY TO STRESS	COURAGE/INTELLIGENCE/SUCCESS
7. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS	COMMUNICATIVE ABILITY
8. WRITTEN COMMUNICATION	COMMUNICATIVE ABILITY
9. PROFESSIONAL QUALITIES	PERSONAL CONTACTS/PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE
10. HUMAN RELATIONS	PERSONAL CONTACTS/PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCY

Notes:

+ - Exceeds scope of Performance Factor

All OER Performance Factors are met by the Leadership Traits from Chapter 2.

Table 2

Ability of Present OER Performance Factors To Meet Leadership Traits

	Leadership Traits from Chapter 2	Performance Factors from Present OER
1.	KNOWLEDGE	JOB KNOWLEDGE *
2.	PLANNING ABILITY	PLAN/ORGANIZE WORK
3.	GOAL SETTING	*
4.	COMMUNICATIVE ABILITY	ORAL/WRITTEN COMMUNICATION
5.	PERSONAL CONTACTS	HUMAN RELATIONS *
6.	INITIATIVE	LEADERSHIP
7.	DELEGATION	*
8.	RESPONSIBILITY	LEADERSHIP

Notes:

* - Does not fulfill scope of leadership trait.

Other OER Performance Factors roughly meet the comparable Leadership Traits identified in Chapter 2.

Chapter 5

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to research applicability of the USAF OER system as a promotion selection tool. Research included a study of leadership and recent developments in performance appraisal systems. The study also reviewed the present OER system and its use in the promotion selection process. The rating factors of the present OER system were compared with factors identified during the research on leadership. Based on this review and comparison, recommendations were made for updating and refining the OER system.

Leadership

The primary function of the USAF officer corps is to lead. This finding is based on commonly accepted organizational practices, heritage, demands of a calling, and the officer's commission. Therefore, the officer's selection for promotion should be based on leadership potential.

Rating Dimensions

Character traits define leadership ability in an individual. There are "required" traits, without which the individual will not be accepted by the group, and "desirable" traits, which enhance the individual's ability to lead. The major required traits are: intelligence, integrity, honesty, courage, successful image, and commitment. Desirable traits are: knowledge, planning ability, goal setting, communicative ability, personal contacts, initiative, delegation, and responsibility. Comparison of these traits with the present OER Performance Factors showed a high degree of commonality. Present rating factors were included in the required and desirable traits. However, the present rating factors did not include all aspects of the required and desirable traits. The OER should be updated with the required and desirable traits as new rating factors.

Feedback

The present OER and promotion selection process do not adequately "let people know where they stand." Mathematical processing of rating scores can provide a foundation for developing a general, realistic feedback device to the ratee. Mathematical handling of rating scores also permits weighting of factors to increase emphasis on a particular trait. Ratings should be weighted and processed for derivation of an overall Promotion Potential Index in order to provide feedback to the ratees; to provide a device for emphasizing more important rating factors; and, to provide a benchmark for promotion selection.

Processing of rating scores can also provide trends and standings to the rater. Feedback would relieve inflationary pressure and encourage more realistic evaluations. Ratings should be processed to let the rater "know where he stands."

Training

Better understanding of the OER system and promotion process would enhance acceptability of the systems, relieve some of the inflationary pressure, and permit officers to concentrate on the important factors of leadership. Formal training on the OER system and promotion process should be enhanced at the base level.

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